A Prefatory

EPISTLE

Concerning ſome

REMARKS

To be publiſhed on

Homer's *ILIAD:*

Occaſioned by

The PROPOSALS of Mr. *Pope* towards a new *Engliſh* Verſion of that Poem.

To the Reverend Dr. SWIFT, *Dean of St.* Patrick's.

By *RICHARD FIDDES*, B. D. Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Earl of *Oxford.*

——Ἀμάρτημ' οὐγενές. Long.

LONDON:

Printed for *John Wyat*, at the *Roſe*, and *Henry Clements*, at the *Half-Moon* in St. *Paul*'s *Church-yard.* 1714.

HISTORY

REMARKS

on

IRELAND.

A Prefatory

EPISTLE, &c.

Reverend Sir,

YOUR acquainting me with Mr. *Pope*'s Deſign of publiſhing a new *Engliſh* Verſion of the *Iliad*, has occaſioned a Review of ſome Curſory Obſervations I had formerly made on that Poem, which I am now putting into a Method ſomewhat more regular, and intend myſelf the Honour, at proper *Intervals*, of communicating to You: In the mean time, if this *Prefatory Addreſs* may be of any uſe, which *you* are the beſt able

to determine, I ſhall be glad to ſee it made publick; tho' from no other Motive of Vanity, except that of being thought to have a ſhare in your Friendſhip, and to have received the moſt ingenuous, the moſt ſenſible and ſeaſonable Proofs of it. In *particular*, from your recommending me to that noble *Mecenas* of the Age, who diſpenſes his Favours with a Magnificence, worthy of the greateſt Mind, in the higheſt Station: And *who*, notwithſtanding he is ſo thoroughly vers'd in all the Arts of Government, and ſo continually taken up with them, yet being a conſummate Maſter in all the Parts of *polite* Literature himſelf, is pleas'd to treat thoſe, who may be thought to have any diſtant Views towards *it*, with all the Freedom of an eaſy, general and improving Converſation.

Pardon

Pardon me, Sir, for laying hold on ſo fair an Opportunity of gratifying a reaſonable *Ambition*; and of acknowledging myſelf, in a moſt Signal manner, obliged to ſo Illuſtrious a *Miniſter*, ſo neceſſary to Her *Majeſty*, to our *Common* Happineſs, and, in the preſent Conjuncture, to that of all *Europe*.

Yet there is one Objection, Mr. *Dean*, which I am ſenſible, were I otherways equal to my Subject, will lye againſt me, for taking this Occaſion of ſhewing myſelf *grateful*; 'Tis thought incumbent on Divines, rather to purſue ſuch a Method of Study, as may have a more immediate Relation to the Nature or Duties of their Office, than to amuſe themſelves with foreign and poetical Diſquiſitions. So, that inſtead of employing our Time or Speculations on the *Father* of the Poets, we ſhould rather be turning over the

Fathers of the Church, the Counſels, the Schoolmen, and Commentators.

This kind of Study has not only its uſe, but is the moſt proper, or rather indeed neceſſary to thoſe of our Order. But may we not too ſometimes divert our Thoughts to leſs grave and ſerious, provided they be innocent Subjects? For what Reaſon?

'Tis ſtrange then, that an Objection, ſo *weak*, ſhould yet on ſome Occaſions, have had ſo great Weight, that I could name you thoſe, who have done themſelves no great Service, by making Court to the *Muſes*, tho' in a chaſt and honourable manner. The excellent Mr. *Norris*, had probably made the ſame Obſervation; and therefore tho' he wanted not a Genius for *Poetry*, yet he ſoon, and perhaps very prudently, laid aſide the Thoughts of Cultivating it.

But

But whether it were on the Account of his poetical Taſt, or for ſome private, and poſſibly *Party-Regards*, that a Perſon of his Merit was not rais'd to a higher Station in the Church, which he ſo well, and faithfully ſerved, is rather to be conſidered by thoſe, who think they have nothing leſs to account for, than the diſpoſal of *Eccleſiaſtical* Preferments.

We cannot however blame Perſons of a *flagrant* Piety, for taking Umbrage, in ſo licentious an Age, at every thing that may lead us too far beſide the Deſign, or ſink us below the Dignity of our *Function*; we ſhould rather be inclined to pardon the Effects of ſuch a *Zeal*, tho' it ſhould poſſibly happen not to be according to Knowledge; eſpecially in *great Men*, who have many times no other way of judging concerning Merit, but by hearing with other Peo-

ples Ears, and are *ſometimes* for that Reaſon, in a manner obliged to make wrong Judgments.

This leſſens our ſurprize at the very different Qualities we now and then find good Men entitled to in their private Converſation, and in their more publick Character. And I ſhall ever account him in the Number of good Men, who, though of a more open and *ingenuous*, is yet of a regular inoffenſive Behaviour, and ſo far from being guilty of any Indecency himſelf, that he will not tolerate, what has the leaſt Tendency that way, in others. But I ſhall ſtill have the greater Idea of his *Goodneſs*, when 'tis obſervable he embraces all proper Occaſions of doing *Good*, and that upon no other Motive, but the bare and genuine Satisfaction of *doing* it.

Certainly it can be no diminution to the Character of *ſuch* a Perſon,

Perſon, that he has *Wit*, that he has entertained or *ſerved* the Publick with it.

But after all, *good Sir*, I am not ſo much concern'd at the Impropriety, as the Difficulty of this Undertaking; and a Senſe of my being ſo very inferior to it. The Author of the *Eſſay* on Criticiſm, who has a Wit capable of every thing, but what relates to the Controverſy betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, will, it is hop'd, with a fine Verſion of the *Iliad*, oblige the World with juſt Remarks upon it. As he has confeſſedly the moſt ſprightly and eaſy *Muſe*, except perhaps one Perſon you will not give me leave to Name, he will now have a noble Occaſion of trying her *Strength*. And there will be a great Diſappointment of the general Expectation, if he do not at once enrich the Language wherein he writes, and reduce it,

which ſeems very much wanting, ſtill nearer to a *Standard*.

This, Sir, as to the *Occaſion* of my preſent Addreſs to you, which, whatever becomes of it, I am proud to embrace; for the farther I have gone out of the way to wait upon you with it, the more reſpectful, I hope, will the *Preſent* be thought.

Let us now, Sir, if you pleaſe, proceed to what it may be proper to premiſe, concerning the *Remarks* themſelves. And what I propoſe, here by the way, in this Prefatory Letter to it; is in the *firſt* place to ſay ſomething more particularly in Defence of ſo bold an Undertaking. Secondly, To give a general Idea of *Homer*'s Character, from the greateſt Authorities and beſt Criticks among the Ancients; thence I ſhall proceed to ſhew the Uſefulneſs of my Deſign: And, laſtly, The Method

peculiar to every one of them, which diſtinguiſhes him, and ſometimes renders even what is leſs regular and beautiful in the Compoſition, yet more agreeable to thoſe who like his *way*, or are inclin'd to favour him.

I have ſaid enough Sir, perhaps too much, to juſtify the Choice of my Subject; but before we proceed any farther, it is neceſſary I ſhould firſt premiſe, and once for all acquaint you, That I do not here intend to confine my ſelf ſtrictly to the Scheme before laid down, or to purſue it in a *Method* exactly regular; but ſhall claim a common Privilege in the Epiſtolary way of Writing, and occaſionally make ſuch Reflections, as moſt naturally occur from the Matter under Conſideration; yet ſhall be careful, Sir, never to wander ſo far from the main Point, but I ſhall ſtill keep it always in view.

Horace,

Horace, whoſe Authority you will not diſpute, has in his *Epiſtles* diſcover'd much of that Humour which he makes the Character of *Vulteius* in human Life:

Et properare loco, & ceſſare, & quærere, & uti gaudentem ——

Which I have ſomewhere ſeen very happily imitated in theſe words:

Went where he pleas'd, ſaid what he thought.

All Perſons have not Strength of Mind to undergo the Labour of Attention to a long Train of Proofs, or to keep a ſteddy Eye on one continued Subject: A more free and unconfined way of Writing, wherein the Author now and then makes eaſy and diverting Excurſions, provided he do not loſe ſight of his Subject, is what *ordinarily* pleaſes the Reader moſt; and eſpecially in the *Epiſtolary* way, where ſuch

ſuch Liberties ſeem as proper for entertaining a Friend, as *Epiſodes* in Heroick Poetry for relieving the Mind.

Montaigne, in his *Eſſays*, is famous for the Irregularity I am ſpeaking of, but 'tis an Irregularity which ſtrangely becomes him; and tho' the *Title* to any one of his Eſſays may almoſt indifferently ſerve for any other, and he is no ſooner enter'd into his Subject (if *ever* he may be ſaid to enter into it) but he runs off immediately from it again; yet his Rambles have ſomething ſo ſprightly and Gentleman-like in them, that he carries us inſenſibly along with him, and we are very much inclined to pardon him a Fault that pleaſes.

But not to abuſe the Liberty here contended for too much, I return to give a general Idea of *Homer*'s Character, from the greateſt Authorities and beſt Criticks among the Ancients. The

The universal Esteem this Poet has been possess'd of in all Ages from his own, is indeed of it self sufficient to excite a Curiosity, and justify an Ambition of being acquainted with him. To attack to dispute the Reputation of *Homer*, is, in effect, to question whether there has been any Person of Distinction in the learned World since his Time, capable of making a true Judgment. He who could accommodate what he wrote to the different Taste, Manners, and Inclinations of Men, and in different Ages, must have been a perfect Master in the Art of *Writing*, and the Knowledge of *Things*. None, but a universal Genius, could have pleas'd all Men, at all Times.

We ought not to envy an Age wherein we live, the Reputation of producing a great many fine and curious Pieces in the several kinds of Poetry, except that of the *Epo-*

peia;

peia; but the Misfortune is, they are commonly built on too ſlight a Foundation, or with too ſlender Materials to laſt long; nay, they ſometimes come to Decay, in leſs time than was employ'd in *Compiling* them: Whether it be, that in theſe Days, wherein we muſt allow Men to have Wit, they more generally want Strength of Genius, or that they write chiefly with regard to the reigning Humour of the Time, or perhaps to the corrupt Taſte which Party-Diſtinctions ſo frequently occaſion: Whatever the Reaſon be, a great many of our modern *Compilers*, ſo they can but raiſe a Paper-work, which may make a little Crackling and a ſudden tranſient Blaze, ſeem to have no farther Conſequences.

Rapin gives us much the ſame Reaſon why the *French* do not excell in the nobler kinds of Poetry. *Great Poetry*, ſays he, *muſt be animated*

mated and ſuſtain'd by great Sentiments: but theſe we ordinarily *want, either becauſe our Wit is too much limited, or becauſe we take not care to exerciſe it* on important *matters.* [*Rap. on Ariſt. P.* §. 26.] And very probably the Author of the Epiſtle before *Virgil*'s *Æneis*, Tranſlated by Mr. *Dryden*, refers to this Paſſage; where, he ſays, "The want "of Genius, of which I have ac- "cus'd the *French*, is laid to their "Charge by one of their own great "Authors, tho' I have forgotten his "Name, and where I read it.

But I can no more ſuppoſe Mr. *Dryden* to have been the Author of that *Epiſtle*, than I can believe he was a rigid *Republican*, and violent Oppoſer of *Hereditary Right*, as the Gentleman to whom we owe it, whoever he was, affects to diſcover himſelf. He particularly endeavours to prove from that one Line,

Se-

Secretiſque piis his dantem jura Catonem.

that *Virgil* was a good Common-wealth's Man in Heart. But Mr. *Dryden*, Sir, in the Life of *Virgil*, obſerves, "That Poet would ſay "nothing of the younger *Cato*, be-"cauſe he was an implacable Ene-"my of *Julius Cæſar*, nor could "the mention of him be pleaſing "to *Auguſtus*: And that Paſſage, *continues he*,

——— *His dantem jura Catonem*,

may relate to his Office, as he was a very ſevere Cenſor.

Mr. *Dryden* might very well have excus'd a Friend from doing him the Kindneſs of writing a Critick for him; wherein he is not only repreſented as ſtrangely forgetful of himſelf, but inconſiſtent with his known and avowed Principles.

But *Homer*, who had all the Force and Extent, as well as Vivacity

vacity of Thought, a Poet ought to have, did not confine his *Muſe* to any ſuch *narrow* or particular Views, but choſe a Subject, and Manner of handling it, ſuitable to the Greatneſs of his Genius: A *Manner*, wherein he has univerſally accompliſh'd the two great Ends of Poetry, and at once ſhew'd himſelf able to *delight* and *inſtruct* all his Readers.

It were endleſs to cite all the Elogiums which the great Men of Antiquity have left us upon this Poet: It may ſuffice in general to ſay, that he has been conſtantly applauded by thoſe who have ever merited the greateſt *Applauſe* themſelves; that his Poems have been conſulted as *Oracles*; his Sentences drawn into *proverbial* Sayings and ſtanding Rules of Life: *Medals* have been ſtruck in Honour to him; and there is ſcarce any Writer among the Ancients, in any Art or Science,

Science, but has been a Debtor to him.

The Veneration paid to him was ſo great, that it ſometimes degenerated into Superſtition: If what *Ælian* reports be true, that he had a Temple with an Image erected to him. 'Tis the leſs to be admired, that they attributed to his Works a magical kind of Power for Curing Diſeaſes, particularly that they ſuppos'd it an effectual Charm towards the removal of a *Quartan* Ague, to lay the fourth Book of the *Iliad* under the Patient's Head. The *Sortes Virgilianæ*, in all probability derived their Origin from a like Superſtitious Regard to the Memory of *Virgil*; and without doubt were altogether as infallible in telling of Fortunes, as *Homer*'s *Amulet* in reſtoring to Health.

But I ſhall deſcend to ſhew what Sentiments in particular ſome of the

the moſt celebrated among the Ancients had of our Poet.

Ariſtotle, one of the firſt Names in the Republick of Letters, and a great Genius himſelf, ſays, That *Homer* not only excelled all other Poets both in *Diction* and *Thought*, but by way of Eminence, that he alone merited the Name of *Poet*. The Superiority he aſcribes to him, is more than Human; 'tis ſpoken of after a manner, which imports, that *Homer*'s Muſe was really of Divine Original. This is *Ariſtotle*'s general Character of him, but very large Quotations might be made out of this Philoſopher, concerning his particular Excellencies. I ſhall but cite that one place, where *Homer* is ſaid to have been the only Poet who knew what it was proper for a *Poet* to deſign, ὃ δεῖ ποιεῖν· for ſo I render the Words, being ſupported by that Reference of *Horace*

race to them —— *Qui nil molitur inepte.* Tho' they may and ſhould perhaps be extended to ſignify, that *Homer* alone knew, what became a Poet with reſpect to all the Graces and Ornaments, as well as the Contrivance or Conduct of a Poem.

But what, Sir, I would farther obſerve from *Ariſtotle* is, That he has drawn a great many of his Rules, not only in Poetry, but even in Morality and Politicks, out of the Writings of *Homer*. In *Poetry* eſpecially, his Authority is to be conſider'd of more weight, as he was an able and judicious Critick: And his Eſſay on Poetry, is, if I miſtake not, allow'd to be the moſt curious and perfect of his Critical Works. If we may believe *Rapin*, there is no arriving at Perfection without the Rules of it. How great, Sir, how happy a Genius muſt *Homer* then have derived

from Nature, not only to ſupply the want of Rules to himſelf, but to make his Poems the *Standard* whereby all *other* Poets, if they would ſucceed, ought to regulate themſelves?

'Tis a reaſonable Preſumption, *Ariſtotle* had the ſame Opinion; and therefore, for the Benefit of Poſterity, reduc'd what flow'd from the natural Genius of * *Homer*, to ſtanding and general Maxims of writing in *Poeſy*. Good Senſe, and a genuine way of Thinking, furniſh'd the Poet with that Happineſs of *Deſigning*, which the Critick has endeavour'd to teach us, if I may ſo ſpeak, the *mechanical* Rules of. To this end, he cites ſeveral Paſſaſages out of *Homer*, as ſo many *Texts*, whereby he illuſtrates, proves

* *Yet in his* Poetic *(Chap.* 8.) Ariſtotle *ſeems to queſtion whether* Homer *excell'd by virtue of his innate Genius, or an acquir'd Art:* ἤτοι διὰ τέχνην, ἢ διὰ φύσιν.

and

and eſtabliſhes the Fundamentals he lays down of the Poetical *Syſtem*, and that, generally, after an inconteſtible manner; yet this deciſive Authority granted by *Ariſtotle* to our Poet, is not of ſo dangerous Conſequence to *Poetry* as it was to *Religion*, to appeal to him, as an Oracle, for the Reſolution of Doubts, the determining *Caſes of Conſcience*, and Confirmation of moral Principles; to which end, as *Janaquil Faber* tells us, his Poems were frequently cited.

Ariſtotle took care to inſtil the great Sentiments he had of *Homer* into the Mind of his *Royal* Charge; and probably we not only owe to his Advice, that *Homer's* Poems were commanded by *Alexander* to be Reviſ'd and Corrected by the great Men about him, but to his Aſſiſtance, that the Edition of the *Casket* (for ſo that of *Alexander* was call'd) came forth after a more

careful and exact Collation. The *Hero* himſelf is ſaid indeed to have aſſiſted at the Work, and thought it not below the Dignity of a *Conqueror*, on ſo important an Occaſion, to become a *Tranſcriber*. Madam *Dacier* ſays, but does not ſay from what Authority, that he tranſcrib'd the whole Work, as it came corrected to him, with his own Hand.

Beſides the Reaſons *Alexander* had in common for ſetting ſo high an Eſteem upon *Homer*, he more eſpecially honour'd him as a Perſon who very well underſtood the *Art* of War, and had laid down many uſeful Inſtructions towards the Improvement of it. *Ælian* ſays, He was the firſt to whom we owe the Theory of Military Order: Τῶν ταχτικῶν θεωρίαν. By which he more particularly intends, the right Method of Drawing up an Army, of aſſigning the ſeveral Battalions which

which compoſe it their proper Poſts; or, to ſpeak the common Dialect, of putting the Battle in Array. It was in regard to this Quality of *Homer*, that *Alexander* laid the Iliad with his Sword, every Night he went to Bed, under his Head, calling it, the *Plan of Martial Diſcipline*; and from hence it has been concluded that this *Hero* propos'd to form himſelf upon *Homer*'s Model. *Rapin* ſays expreſly, it was from this great Original *Alexander* became ſo *Valiant*. We may obſerve here an Inſtance of the Caution wherewith that excellent Critick uſually draws his Characters. *Valour* was eminently the Character of this Prince, and which no body will diſpute to him. But his *Conduct* is not on all Occaſions to be examin'd too nicely by the Rules of Military Prudence: Nay, he ſometimes prov'd Victorious againſt all the Rules of it.

So that if there be any good Foundation for what the Criticks obſerve, that the Deſign *of the Iliad* is to deſcribe and exemplify bodily Strength, *of the Odyſſy*, Prudence and Subtiliry of Mind; *Alexander* the Great ſeems rather to have taken the former of theſe Poems for his *Model*. You will not, Sir, your ſelf deny, that his Succeſs was ſometimes owing to a happy *Temerity*, and not always to a Courage well conducted.

Yet this Diſtinction of the two Poems, from the different Scope of them, is not to be extended too far. In the *Iliad*, the Characters of *Neſtor* and *Ulyſſes* are drawn in a Light which ſhews the Force of Military, and on many Occaſions of Civil Prudence, to the greateſt Advantage. If the principal Deſign of this Poem, which I ſhall not diſpute, be to give us an Idea of Martial Proweſs, it is a Proweſs which we

are

are never to draw into Example, contrary to the Reasons of Policy, or the more publick and desirable Ends of Peace.

There are many beautiful Passages of the *Iliad*, wherein *Homer* takes occasion to discover the ill Effects of a Spirit breathing nothing but *War*, tho' supported with the greatest natural Courage. Thus *Agamemnon* is introduced reproaching *Achilles*, as delighting only in Tumults, and placing his greatest Glory and Happiness in being a publick Incendiary; in creating Jealousies, and inflaming Divisions. *Jupiter*, in another Place, is represented accosting the God of War himself much after the same manner: He charges *Mars* directly as a *Homicide*, as destructive of mortal Race, and embruing his Hands in human Blood; which yet every Prince contracts the Guilt of, that enters into an unjust War, or pro-

secutes it, when Peace may be had on good Terms; and every Person in proportion, as he is concern'd in advising or carrying on such a War, or in embarassing the Methods that are employ'd to put a Period to it. * *Jupiter*, on another Occasion, impeaches *Mars* of *Inconstancy*, of changing Sides, of deserting the Cause of his Friends, and going over to that of his Enemies; in a word, of having no true or standing Principle of Fidelity or Honour, but desiring chiefly to distinguish himself by reaping the Spoils of War, or appearing at the Head of publick Factions. Upon which Occasion, *Eustathius* has this judicious Remark, That to love War is not the Character wherein a Hero's Glory consists; he ought, if he would recommend

* Ἀλλαπρέσσαλλο, *the Word* Homer *uses, is capable, according to the* Scholia, *of any of these Senses.*

him-

himſelf to the Eſteem of wiſe Perſons, to make War, where Neceſſity requires, or it is incumbent on him, but not out of Choice, or an Inclination ariſing from any private Motive of *Avarice*, or Ambition.

Can we, Sir, have a clearer Proof, that the Deſign of the *Iliad* is not to give us an Idea of Courage in Oppoſition to the Maxims of Military Conduct? It is no leſs evident, that in the Judgment of *Homer*, a Martial is not only conſiſtent with a *pacifick* Diſpoſition, but ought never to be ſeparated from it. A Hero, the Bent of whoſe Inclination is wholly turn'd upon War, upon what Motive ſoever it ariſes, no more comes up to his true Character, than a Critick, whoſe principal End is to run down, to bite and devour his Authors. The true and laudable End of Criti-

cism is to shew, in a good Light, the Beauties of a Writer, as that of War is to procure to us the Blessings of Peace, and enable us to cultivate the Arts of it.

What then was the Ground of that high Esteem, which *Alexander* professed for the Writings of *Homer*, and for the *Iliad* in particular; seeing it does not appear, that he propos'd to regulate his Conduct by it. Pardon me, Sir, a Conjecture upon which, 'tis not unreasonable to suppose, this Esteem might be founded. An insatiable Love of Glory was *Alexander's* predominant Passion. One signal Instance hereof was, a violent desire he had of being thought the Son of *Jupiter Ammon*. Nothing could tend more to facilitate the belief of this Story, than the Legends we meet with, of the same kind, in *Homer*. Several of his Heroes are of *Celestial*

stial Extraction, and there is every where so familiar an Entercourse between them, and his Deities of both Sexes, as might render the Affair *Jupiter* is reported to have had with *Olympias*, at least more credible; and so make way for the easier Establishment of *Alexander*'s Divinity. Yet, if I may cite a Passage from the Memoirs of those Times, founded only upon some specious Surmises; it is said, that *Mactanebo* King of *Ægypt*, a Magician and Astrologer, Characters almost inseparable, having by his Skill in Conjuring and the Stars, foreseen that his Subjects would one day Rebel and Dethrone him, he resolved, by way of prevention, and as having the less Danger and Disgrace in it, voluntarily to lay down and *Abdicate* the Kingdom. Upon this he repairs to *Philip* King of *Macedon*, puts himself upon the Favour of that Prince,

and

and is generouſly received and entertained by him. But, for his own part, very *ungenerouſly* improves the Occaſion, to diſhonour *Philip* in the moſt ſenſible Parts, by gaining acceſs to his Lady, in the ſhape of *Jupiter Ammon*; as *Mundus* afterwards, by a like Artifice, vitiated *Paulina* in that of the God *Anubis*. But this, Sir, is only mentioned as part of the Secret Hiſtory of that Court, and as deſerving no more Credit than any Novel, which goes under the Name in our own.

In Juſtice to *Olympias*, for we cannot be too much concerned on all Occaſions to vindicate the Honour of her Sex, it ought to be obſerved, that ſhe was a ſtranger to this Impoſture, and expreſſed a due Reſentment againſt her Son, for affecting ſo much to have it paſs upon the World. For thus ſhe rallies him in one of her Letters.

Letters. "You ought to be very "cautious how you expose me "to the Jealousy and Revenge "of *Juno*, whom yet I never in-"jur'd. Tho' this Lady, if the best Historians have not much injur'd her, wanted not the Vanity, had there been any Foundation for it, to have credited a Story herself, which, according to the Theology of those Days, would have brought no great Disgrace upon Her.

Not only Heroes and Philosophers, but the wisest and most celebrated of Lawgivers, have had *Homer* in great Veneration. *Lycurgus* was at the Pains to transcribe intire Copies of his Works which he found in *Ionia*, and to bring them into *Greece*, which was the first Edition of them in those Parts. *Solon*, on all occasions, shewed no less Regard to him, and particularly enacted, that the Reciters

Reciters in the *Panatheneans*, ſhould make Uſe of his Verſes. But I barely mention theſe great Men. The Judgment of *Plato*, concerning our Poet, will require to be more copiouſly and diſtinctly conſidered; for tho' this Philoſopher ſpeaks of him in very high and magnificent Terms, calling him the moſt perfect and divine of Poets; the Maſter and Prince of Tragedians, † and the fineſt Poetical Genius; yet at other times he attacks the Reputation of his Friend, for ſo he acknowledges *Homer*, with all the Ardor and Spirit of an Enemy. But on that very Account, his Authority, ſo far as he ſpeaks to the Poet's Advantage, is of the more Weight and Importance to us.

What the particular Objections are, which this Philoſopher has

† Παντικώτατον.

raiſed

raiſed againſt *Homer*, will be ſeverally conſidered in their proper Place. It may ſuffice, at preſent, to ſay in general, that they are more plauſible and ingenious, than ſolid. One of the two, which I ſhall here take Notice of, is ſo weak, that I am ſurprized to think how it ſhould come from ſo great and wiſe a Man.

He objects then, that if *Homer*'s Poems had been ſo excellent, ſo uſeful as was pretended to inſtruct, or reform the World, 'tis ſtrange he found no more Friends to do him Honour, and take Care of his Intereſts. This Prejudice is grounded on a Suppoſition, than which there is nothing in Fact more frequently contradicted. Were we to proceed upon it, in determining the Merits of thoſe who handle the Pen, a great Number of the beſt Writers muſt be baniſh'd the Commonwealth of Learning.

Learning, as *Homer* was that of *Plato*. The Poets eſpecially will riſe up againſt this Philoſopher, for bringing ſo general a Diſgrace upon them. They will never ſubmit to be tryed by a Rule, which ſeems to have been founded in a particular Prejudice againſt their Fraternity. Poverty ought not to detract from the Merit of any Perſon, in any Profeſſion, but to ſuppoſe it derogatory to the Merit of a Poet, is in effect to explode and proſcribe Poetry it ſelf.

The Philoſopher proceeds in puſhing his Objection. If *Homer*'s Poems had been ſubſervient to the real Advancement of Knowledge or Virtue in the World, he would not have been under a neceſſity of ſauntring about the Country, from Door to Door, reciting his Verſes. He could not have wanted a *Patron* among the Rich and the Noble,

Noble: One or other of them would have called him in, taken him under Protection, and perhaps have made him a *Domeſtick*, or his Poet *à Latere*. The Force of what is here objected lies in this, that a good Poet can never want Encouragement, or an Opportunity of filling his Pocket. It would have been very acceptable to ſome of our beſt Poets, had they found this a ſtanding and unerring Maxim. Hard Fate it is, ſays Mr. *Cl——s* in a Dedication to the Lord *Ch——l*, that while Poets, like Silkworms, unravel their very Bowels for the Pleaſure and Luxury of Mankind, they themſelves muſt be entomb'd in their own Bowels. The Conceit is ingenious enough. But I do not know, while we are celebrating the Praiſes of a Patron, and aſcribing to him all the good Qualities, a great Man

ought

ought to have, whether it may be ſo proper to remind him of his Duty, except perhaps there be ſomething in his Temper which may render ſuch an Intimation at leaſt the more excuſeable.

Yet whatever Complaints have been formerly made, that Poets of the firſt Diſtinction were neglected; it may be obſerved to the Honour of the preſent Age, they have had, ſuch of them as excel, a more equal Regard paid to them; with a juſt Taſte of polite Learning, an ancient Spirit of Magnificence towards the Favourites of the Muſes has reviv'd, whereof, would you pardon me for naming them, I could name more Inſtances than one.

But what, Sir, if the very Facts upon which *Plato* raiſes theſe Objections againſt *Homer*, ſhould have no good Foundation? What if this Poet recited his Verſes

Verſes not out of Neceſſity, as *Plato* would inſinuate; but in Compliance with a Practice, which was thought no leſs honorary in thoſe Days, than the Art of Poetizing itſelf. It were needleſs to prove that Poets then recited, as they now write, for Fame, and not only for Bread, or if I may uſe an Expreſſion imported from a Neighbouring Kingdom, to keep the Wolf from the Door.

'Tis to this Purpoſe obſervable, that the wiſe Son of *Syrach* mentions thoſe *who recited Verſes in writing*, Ecclus. 44. 5. amongſt the great Men of Antiquity, who were moſt *renowned* for Wiſdom and Knowledge themſelves, and for the wholeſome Inſtructions they impa[illegible]d to others. It happens indeed unfortunately for *Plato*, but no leſs for our Advantage, that in another place *Socrates* is introduced, proving after

after a *formal* and very copious manner, that thoſe, who of old went about reciting of Verſes, were no leſs inſpired than the Poets themſelves. But how, Sir, can that in *Plato*'s Opinion be an Argument againſt the Excellency of *Homer*'s Poems, that very Argument, I ſay, which *Plato* makes uſe of to prove *Homer*'s Inſpiration? If it were no Objection againſt *Homer*'s Verſes, that he had the Glory of being inſpir'd, it could not for the ſame Reaſon be objected to them, according to *Plato*, that he went about reciting them.

'Tis wrong too in *Plato*, and againſt the Faith of Hiſtory, that *Homer* found no Patron. The Story of *Mentes* the rich Merchant, who was a Perſon of Letters and great Ingenuity himſelf, is well known. He treated *Homer* with a Reſpect due to his Merit,

Merit, and made him the Companion of his Travels; and then it was, he became ſo exactly acquainted with the Situation of the Places through which he paſſed, and with the Manners and Cuſtoms of the Inhabitants, which are deſcribed ſo happily in his Works, and contribute very much to the Beauty, no leſs than the Uſefulneſs of them. And certainly one conſiderable uſe of them, is to teach Gentlemen, who would go abroad to any good Effect, the proper Art and principal End of Travelling.

Neither, if we may believe * *Seneca*, were the Circumſtances of *Homer* ſo narrow, but that they enabled him to keep a Servant, and from hence this Moraliſt particularly recommends him as an Example of Frugality. He

* De Conſol. cap. 12.

ſuppoſes

ſuppoſes a great and numerous Retinue rather an Incumbrance, than of real uſe to the true Ends of Living: And confeſſes himſelf aſhamed of complying with the Luxury of his own Age, againſt the Rules of primitive Plainneſs and Simplicity.

But let all, Sir, that has been ſaid upon this Article go for nothing. Let it be granted that *Homer* was poor, and that he recited for this Reaſon; in a word, that he found no Patron, or Benefactors: Why, all this amounts to no more, than that Learning is not equally eſteem'd at all Times, or by all Perſons. The Cities thro' which *Homer* travell'd were not Inhabited by the Family of *Harley*, of *St. John*, or *Bromley*; Therefore *Homer* was no good Poet. This in effect is *Plato*'s Argument. Would any one deſire a better?

How

How weakly ſoever *Plato* ſupported this Objection againſt *Homer*, from his ſuppos'd indigent Condition, yet it muſt be own'd agreeable enough to vulgar Opinion at all times. 'Tis ordinary, and there is indeed great Appearance of Reaſon as well as Modeſty in it, to pay a Deference to whatever is done by our Superiors. Whether it be, that Perſons in lower Circumſtances are preſum'd to want Elevation of Mind? Or under Circumſtances which diſtract the Mind, not to have a due Extent of it? Whatever the Reaſon be, it is frequently obſerv'd, that a ſplendid Fortune, or a great Name, is of more Importance to a Writer, than a good Pen. Perſons in a ſuperior Condition have much the ſame Advantage in Writing, which the wiſe Son of *Syrach* tells us after an agreeable manner, they have in

Speaking.

Speaking. *When*, ſays he, *a rich Man ſpeaketh, every Man holdeth his Tongue, and look, what he ſaith they extol it to the Clouds; but if the poor Man ſpeak, they ſay, What Fellow is this?* Ecclus. 13. 23. Even in the natural Reaſon of the thing, it muſt be granted, that a dead Weight hanging as it were continually on the Spirits, either from any indigent or afflicting Circumſtances of Life, cannot but very much impair the Force, and reſtrain the Activity of a Man's Mind. *Ovid* is a known and remarkable Inſtance of this. In his Exile, that brisk and generous Spirit, which every where animates what he had writ before, does on all Occaſions, when he has the greateſt need of it, forſake him; and the moſt he can do, is to give his Verſification a ſmooth and eaſy Turn, or now and then to ſtrike out into ſome pert and agreeable Eſſay of Wit. The

The other Article which *Plato* brings againſt *Homer*, is more ſpecious, and not without a reaſonable Foundation; it is the principal Article he grounds his Edict upon, for diſcharging the Poet his Commonwealth. But he diſcharges him with Circumſtances of Solemnity, and in the moſt reſpectful manner; he conducts him out with the higheſt Marks of Honour, or rather indeed of *Royalty*; He anoints his Head with Oil, and ſets a Crown upon it.

But to examine the Charge it ſelf; *Plato*, that he might avoid a popular Odium from the great Reputation Poetry was then in, and on Account of the Diſhonour he had done it in ſeveral Reſpects before, does in the Tenth Book of his *Utopian Republick*, gather his whole Strength, as it were, into one deciſive Blow,

and maintains in particular, that Poetry is dangerous to the Society he had form'd, conſider'd *as an Art of Imitation.* The Reaſon he gives is, that it draws the Images not only of Actions that are commendable and praiſe-worthy, but of ſuch as are infamous; and that * *weak Minds are not furniſh'd with an Antidote ſtrong enough againſt the Poyſon ſuch Images are apt to infuſe; being unable to diſtinguiſh what Actions deſerve their Imitation, and what are unworthy of it.* He had before produc'd ſeveral Inſtances out of *Homer* to this Purpoſe, which there was therefore no Occaſion for him here to repeat. Thus, particularly in the Third Book, he repreſents the Imbecillity and ſeeming Deſpondency of Mind in ſome of *Homer*'s principal Characters, as ha-

* Ὅσοι μὴ ἔχουσι φάρμακον τὸ εἰδέναι αὐτὰ οἷα τυγχάνει ὄντα.

ving

ving a bad Influence to emaſculate his Readers, and make them of a mean and abject Spirit, unable to Support themſelves under Misfortunes with a becoming Bravery and Reſolution. Let us, ſays he, not admit of ſuch ignoble and whining Lamentations, but leave them to weak Minds, or to the weaker Sex, tho' not to the more generous of them neither. The exceſs of Grief and Indignation *Achilles* gives himſelf up to, and the variety of odd and diſconſolate Poſtures *Homer* repreſents that Hero in, do here afford the Philoſopher, with all his Gravity, a fine Vein of Raillery.

Yet 'tis granted, Sir, this Argument of *Plato* is deſigned in general againſt the principal Art of Poetry it ſelf, which is to deſcribe Vice on occaſion as well as Virtue, in lively and proper Co-

lours. Tho' 'tis more particularly, and by direct Application, levell'd againſt *Homer*, as he was happy above all other Poets, in deſcribing things accurately, and to the Life. He was therefore proſcrib'd by *Plato*, for the ſame Reaſon the *Athenians* enacted the Law of *Oſtraciſm*, on account of a ſhining and ſuperior, but *dangerous* Merit.

And if I may be permitted, Sir, to give you my Thoughts on this Article, where Poetry is not very Chaſte both in the Sentiment and Language; it may ſtill be a Queſtion whether we had not better want thoſe beautiful Images in it, which move and gratify the Paſſions, than that the Heart ſhould be in any danger of being Betray'd or Corrupted by them. As it would be much more for the Advantage of Religion, that we ſhould be without

out ſome of the learned and ingenious *Roman* Caſuiſts, than that they ſhould have diſplay'd their Invention in finding out ſuch nice and curious Caſes, as rather tend to fill the Mind with impure Speculations, than to direct the Conſcience. However, as the Deſign of *Plato* was to make Men entirely ſubmit to the Government of Reaſon, and to teach a more juſt and refin'd way of Reaſoning on clear Idea's, he acted very agreeably to his Deſign, in diſcarding an Art which is principally, and in the great Beauties of it, addreſs'd to the *Imagination.*

Yet as *Homer*, Sir, was very Chaſte in his Deſcriptions, as the humane Actions of ill Example, which he relates, are barely related, tho' in a proper and lively manner; as he uſes no artificial Colours to recommend them to

our Imitation, but leaves them to ſpeak for themſelves; We muſt ſeek for ſome other Reaſon upon which *Plato* thought this Poet ſo highly dangerous to his Eſtabliſhment. And this Reaſon I take to have been founded in the Images *Homer* makes, not from the Manners of his Heroes or human Characters, but of his Deities. When Perſons of ſuperior Condition, are wanting in the Decorum which ought to be obſerved in their Conduct, or when they fail in any Point of ſtrict Morality, their Example is of leſs dangerous Influence, becauſe we conſider them as Men, and that their Irregularities proceed from a Weakneſs, whereof they are, or ought to be aſham'd. But when a Deity, which an Idea of Perfection muſt be ſuppos'd to accompany, is brought down from Heaven ruffled with the moſt indecent

decent of humane Paſſions, or engaging in ſome criminal or unworthy Deſign, this is an Example at once ſhocking to the Unſtanding, and contagious to the Heart; and which ſeems indeed not ſo much to excuſe, as to authorize and juſtify the like Paſſions and Diſorders, in a leſs perfect Order of Beings. It appears, at firſt View, highly reaſonable, Mortals ſhould not only draw the Rules of Life from the Deities they Worſhip, but that they ſhould Worſhip them in a manner agreeable to their Attributes. 'Tis natural for Men to imitate what they admire, and to think ſuch an Imitation innocent at leaſt, if not in ſome Degree laudable. Upon this Occaſion *Minutius Felix* argues very well againſt the Theology of the Heathen World, and particularly that of *Homer*, as dangerous at once to confound

all true Notions of Religion and Morality, and to introduce the most impious and immoral Practices.

'Tis granted, Sir, *Plato* in his Tenth Book, where he principally insists on the Danger of Poetry as an Art of Imitation, does not directly charge *Homer* with ascribing to his Gods Manners unworthy of them. He had made this a special Article of Impeachment against the Poet in his Third Book, and brought several Instances out of him to prove it. Not to mention the rest of them, he animadverts upon *Homer*, for giving *Vulcan* the Air and Manner of a Buffoon; upon which he becomes the Jest of the other Gods, and raises a *Laugh* among them. But *Plato* might also on this Occasion have attack'd *Homer*, not only for representing his Deities out of Character, but for not observing

ſerving a fundamental Law of Epick Poetry, and wherein one proper Diſtinction of it conſiſts; which is, that it ſhould be grave and magnificent throughout. The ſame Rule holds with reſpect to Tragedy, which is only a different Conſideration of Epick Poetry; and for this Reaſon Tragi-Comedy has been condemn'd by the beſt Modern Criticks, as deſigning to raiſe Paſſions of a quite different Nature, and by that means breaking the Tide of each of them, and ſo, by conſequence, fruſtrating its own Deſign. But 'tis hop'd the good Senſe of the *Engliſh* Nation will never give Encouragement to any ſuch Motley and inconſiſtent Performance again. If Terror and Commiſeration be the principal End of Tragedy, the higher thoſe Paſſions are wound up, and the leſs diverted, the more perfect certainly muſt the Poem be.

But there was a particular Reaſon, why *Plato* ſhould not too often recite ſuch Paſſages out of *Homer*, as reflected on the Theology of thoſe Times, and the Religion eſtabliſh'd by the Laws. The divine *Plato* was not without human Paſſions: He had before his Eyes the Sufferings of his great Maſter *Socrates*, for declaring himſelf ſo openly in the Cauſe of the one true God. *Plato*, in what he ſays concerning the Simplicity of the Divine Nature, not only diſcovers the ſame Sentiments upon this fundamental Article of Religion, but explains and demonſtrates it after a moſt ſublime and perſpicuous manner. He proceeds Methodically from it to that of the Immutability of God, and from hence to his Veracity; and upon theſe ſeveral Attributes has perhaps as great Thoughts as ever entered

enter'd, without Revelation, into the Mind of Man.

If *Plato*, Sir, were not so far influenced by his Principles as to make them the Rule of his Practice; if he became an Occasional Conformist to the Religion of his Country, and made shew of an exterior Compliance with the Established Forms of it, which yet he Condemned both in his private Judgment, and interpretatively in his Writings. In a word, if he consulted his Ease, Safety and Interest more than the satisfying of his own Mind; why, tho' nothing can be said from humane Weakness and Corruption to justify or excuse such a Conduct; yet we the less wonder at in a Heathen, when we have known Christians not only so Corrupt as in effect to follow it, but so weak, as by necessary Construction publickly to defend it. There are at least

more

more favourable Allowances to be made a Philosopher recovering himself by the Natural Light of his own Mind, out of the dark State of Heathenism, than to one who enjoys the Benefit of Divine Revelation, and especially where 'tis profess'd and taught in its greatest Purity.

How blameable soever *Plato* was in his Practise, it must however be granted him, that in decrying the Poets, who were the Theologers of those Days, and in whose Writings the People sought for their Religion, he took a proper Method, tho' indirectly, to destroy Polytheism and Superstition, and to open the Eyes of Men for receiving the great Truths he so frequently lays down, in reference both to Speculation and Practice. In a Commonwealth, which was to subsist on the Foundation of good Principles, and a more pure Morality,

Morality; What could be more reaſonable, than to exclude the Poets, whoſe Fictions tended ſo much both to miſlead Men into the moſt dangerous Errors, and to favour the moſt groſs Corruptions?

After all, Sir, *Plato* does not abſolutely condemn Poetry; he allows of Hymns compos'd in Praiſe of the Gods, and of great Men. But he fears the Conſequences of admitting a Muſe whoſe principal Deſign is to pleaſe, and by whoſe artful and inſinuating Addreſs the Force of Reaſon, the Commanding Power in his Commonwealth, may be broken or diſſipated. Nay, he does not object even againſt the Pleaſure which ariſes from a well-writ Poem, provided the Matter and Diction of it be Chaſte and Innocent. I ſhall only add, that in Quality of a Legiſlator he does not

not univerſally prohibit the Reading of the Poets, but only to young Perſons, on whoſe tender Minds ill Impreſſions are eaſier made, and who want Capacity to judge well of what they are very much pleas'd with. And therefore in his Book of Laws, he allows only to thoſe who are Fifty Years old, to ſelect ſuch Paſſages out of the Poets on publick Occaſions of Feſtivity as are grave and decent, and may be ſung without offending chaſt Ears. 'Tis more eſpecially from this Incapacity in young People of judging right between the real Deſign and heightning Colours, or, if I may ſpeak ſo, the Drapery of a Poem, that *Homer* is proſcrib'd by the Philoſopher. "*Whether*, ſays he, *his Fictions* "*concerning the Gods are to be ex-* "*plain'd Allegorically, or in a Literal* "*Senſe.*"

It

It cannot then be said, that *Plato* absolutely banish'd Poetry, but only laid it under some wholsome and convenient Restraints: *The Law ceases with the Reasons of it.* A Rule, which obtains in all other Civil Constitutions, was reasonable in that of *Plato.* He had early addicted himself to Poetry, had a Genius for it, and was always a Lover of it in his Heart. But 'twas generous in him to prefer the Good of a Community he had erected, to all private Considerations; and it is more generous in us to ascribe the severe Things he has spoken against Poetry to so noble a Principle, than to say he did it out of Envy; because, as *Ælian* reports, having for some time devoted himself to the Muses, and composed certain Heroick Verses, upon comparing them with *Homer*'s, he was conscious of so vast a Desparity, that he condemn'd them to the Flames.

You

You will obſerve, Sir, that in my humble Opinion, *Plato* had Reaſon for proſcribing *Homer* his Commonwealth; which tho' well regulated in many Reſpects, did not exclude Pagans from being Members of it, but rather ſuppoſes them ſo; and his Reaſons appear ſtill to hold good, in all the Parts of the Pagan and Idolatrous World: tho' where Chriſtianity is profeſs'd and taught, they loſe all their Force, and we have nothing to fear from them.

If the Judgment here made of *Homer*'s Poems be thought too bold, beſides the Reaſons already given for it, I have, Sir, two great Authorities to ſupport it: The firſt is that of *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus*, who ſpeaking of the Methods *Romulus* took to reform Religion, applauds that Prince for diſcarding the fabulous Stories which had been introduc'd from the *Greeks* concerning the

the Heathen Gods, as of the moſt dangerous Conſequence to corrupt both Religion and Morality. But I am further juſtified by a modern Critick, and ſo excellent a one, that in the Opinion of *Dryden*, if all other Criticks were loſt, he alone is ſufficient to teach a-new the Rules of Writing. It is Mr. *Rapin*, who, in his celebrated Elogium of *Homer*, ſays, that *as he has been in ſome manner the Author of Paganiſm, the Religion whereof, he eſtabliſh'd by his Poems; one may ſay, that never Prophet had ſo many Followers as he.*

I ſhall mention but one Authority more, to ſhew how much *Homer* has been eſteem'd, and that is the famous Critick *Longinus*; who, in his Treatiſe of the *Sublime*, every where cites him as the great Maſter, which thoſe that would excel in the ſeveral Beauties of it, are to form themſelves by. But in giving a Character of this Poet, he diſcovers

vers a very fine and artful Addreſs: He borrows an Image from himſelf, to deſcribe the Extent of his own Genius; 'tis that of *Diſcord*, which *Homer* repreſents, while walking upon the Earth, as having her Head in Heaven. *Virgil* was ſo taken with the Beauty of this Image, which yet ſeems bold enough, that he has transferr'd it to the Deſcription of *Fame:*

Ingrediturque ſolo, & caput inter nubila condis.

Which comes very near to a verbal Tranſlation of that Line in the *Iliad*,

Οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξε κάρη καὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ βαίνει.

But *Longinus*, in the Judgment he makes of *Homer*, is not to be conſider'd merely as a Critick that underſtood the Rules of juſt Writing, and after *Ariſtotle* has eſtabliſh'd

bliſh'd many of them on *Homer*'s Authority; but, as one to whom the Works of this Poet were ſo familiar, that his Thoughts and Studies ſeem to have been in great meaſure taken up with them. Thus in the celebrated Treatiſe we have mention'd, he conſiders him as the moſt perfect Model of the Sublime. In three others, which we regret the Loſs of, he treats concerning his Queſtions, his Philoſophy, and Problems: And theſe perhaps, if recoverable, might be of as great uſe to the Learned World as the *Eſſay*, wherein he lays down the Rules of Writing in the Sublime Style, and after a correct manner. I do not, Sir, hereby intend (if it may be permitted me to reſume a Subject which has been touch'd upon already) that the Rules of Writing are not neceſſary; for nothing is more ordinary, than for Perſons of a bold and flowing Invention, to want

want Judgment; and it is principally in Favour of ſuch Writers, that the Art of Criticiſm has been ſo much cultivated and improved: Tho', after all, it may be queſtion'd, whether Rules have ſo frequently ſerv'd to correct the Diſorders of a bold luxuriant Genius, as to put Men upon Writing without any Genius or Spirit at all. Thoſe who have a natural Vivacity and Strength of Mind (Qualities inſeparable in an Epick Poet) will, or at leaſt may write well without Rules; but all the Rules in the World will never enable a Writer to diſtinguiſh himſelf without theſe Qualities. Nature gives Rules; they are founded originally in the Reaſon of Things; and therefore a great Genius, in order to diſcover them, has nothing to do but to conſult Reaſon, and carefully follow the Orders of it. The greateſt and firſt Writers among the Anci-

Ancients, did not before-hand publiſh the Rules upon which they would Write; but the natural Force of their Minds enabled them to write after a manner, from which the Rules of Writing have been ſince drawn by the Criticks. But, not to run too far into this Controverſy about the Neceſſity of Rules, and to juſtify *Longinus* in particular for having left us an excellent Treatiſe concerning them; let us, Sir, if you think good, come to this Reſolution; That tho' Rules are not abſolutely neceſſary to thoſe who are qualified by Nature to write, yet they are very uſeful to ſave great Wits, who are not always the moſt willing to undergo it, the Labour of Attention. And I am humbly of Opinion, that if the Fire and Vivacity of *Shakeſpear*'s Genius had permitted him to examine every thing he writ with due Application of Mind, he might, with-

without reading the Criticks, have left his Poems much more correct than we now have them: Tho' did not the Boldneſs and Beauty of his Conceptions in great meaſure attone for his Irregularities, we ſhould indeed more eaſily pardon them to his Want of human Literature. It appears to me a very juſt Remark of a late ingenious Writer, that * "The World had "ſeen the faireſt Draughts before "any ſettled Rules were given: "And perhaps, *continues he*, the "Works of the Learned have been "more Formal, but not more Cor-"rect, ſince Men wrote according "to Art.

But to determine this Queſtion, whether Nature or Art contribute more towards forming a Poet, we need go no farther than the Compariſon which *Longinus* makes be-

* *Preface to the* Diſſertation *on Reading the* Claſſicks.

twixt

twixt *Apollonius* and *Homer*; the former of theſe Poets was more exact in obſerving Rules, and very rarely offended againſt them. *Homer*, what as Soveraign of the Poets might better be granted him, aſſumes on Occaſion a deſpotick Power, and ſets his Prerogative above Laws. Yet there is no Diſpute which of theſe two was the greater in all the beautiful and ſhining Qualities of a Poet. I do not know, Sir, whether we might not form ſomething of a like Compariſon between *Johnſon* and the other of our own Poets I have juſt named. *Ben.* certainly underſtood the Laws of Dramatick Writing much better, was more regular in his Compoſitions, and had a good Stock of human Literature. *Shakeſpear* had nothing but Nature to draw from; yet tho' his Writings are not nicely to be examin'd by the Rules

Rules of *Ariſtotle*, he every where entertains his Readers with rich and noble Sentiments; like the great Lights of the *Gentile* World, who liv'd under a mere State of Natural Religion; their own Reaſon diſcovered to them many excellent Truths and Principles of Morality, yet for want of a fix'd and ſtanding Rule of Life, which can only be had with Certainty from Revelation, they fail'd very much with reſpect to their Notions of Moral Virtue in particular Inſtances. Shall we, Sir, conſider *Shakeſpear* in relation to Poetry, as we do the Heathen Moraliſts in reference to Religion, and not condemn him too rigorouſly by a Law he was ignorant of. If after this I cite the following Words of *Horace* upon the preſent Article.

——Ego nec ſtudium ſine divite vena,
Nec rude quid proſit video Ingenium.

It is not ſo much for the ſake of a known and popular Authority, as in regard to what Mr. *Trapp* in his * fine Eſſay on the Nature and Origin of Poety, has taken occaſion to obſerve upon it. Among other Obſervations he has this pertinent One; That we often admire and commend a Poet, who writes with Wit and Spirit, tho' he be a Stranger to the Rules of Art; but without that Flame and Force of Mind which conſtitute the Poetical Genius, how faithfully ſoever a Pretender to Poetry keep to his Rules, we either throw him by with Contempt, or read him with Diſtaſt. We blame indeed the Remiſsneſs and Negligence of the former, but we cannot, without ſome kind of Indignation, bear the labour'd and *regular* Dullneſs of the latter. I ſhall add nothing further to ſhew,

* *Prælectiones Poeticæ.* P. 42.

that tho' Nature and Rules are both neceſſary towards finiſhing a Poet, yet a natural Genius is far ſuperior to all the Advantages of Art without it.

But while I am talking of Rules, Sir, I would be thought in ſome Meaſure to keep within them my ſelf; and having done with my Authorities, am next to diſcharge my Promiſe of acquainting you how far, and in what reſpects, I apprehended this Deſign might be uſeful.

Tho' *Homer* has been Commented upon by a great many learned Men, who, as their Genius or Method of Study led them, have taken his Works as it were to pieces, and ſeverally conſider'd him with reſpect to his Stile, his Grammar, his Philoſophy and Geography, and almoſt all the bright and proper Characters of an Author; yet none, that I know, has written a Critick upon

upon him, ſo uſeful as might be wiſh'd, and which preſents us in one intire View with a Draught of his greateſt Beauties. *Euſtathius* indeed has publiſh'd immenſe Comments upon him; But beſides that, the Criticiſms of this excellent and learned Archbiſhop are not always juſt, they are mix'd with Obſervations of little Importance, wherein he is alſo thought too tedious and diffuſe. So that we cannot come ſo readily as might be deſir'd, at thoſe very beautiful Reflections which frequently occur in him, but are taken up by the way with certain Grammatical Niceties, which yet are not altogether uſeleſs; tho' a labour'd Criticiſm upon Words is never more out of place than upon an Author, wherein *all things* are great, entertaining and inſtructive. Add to this, that the good and learned Archbiſhop wrote

in a Language, which is not now underſtood by all thoſe, who may be curious enough to have the Beauties of *Homer* obſerved to them in their own Language.

It is the more neceſſary to explain the Writings of *Homer*, in order to illuſtrate ſeveral Paſſages, we meet with in the beſt of human Authors, that allude or refer to him. *Plato*, tho' he does not on all Occaſions treat *Homer* with the Regard he profeſſes for him, yet owes a great many beautiful Thoughts to him, and perhaps ſome of the brighteſt in his Works. *Æſchylus*, as *Atheneus* reports, acknowledged that his Tragedies were in the main compos'd of the Fragments which he gather'd up from *Homer*'s Table. Thoſe that are the leaſt acquainted with *Virgil* know, that he has not only copy'd after *Homer* in ſeveral other Places, but in almoſt all the

common Places of Poetry; which *Scaliger*, in order to render *Virgil* ſuperior upon the Compariſon, has made a large Collection of from them both; Tho' this Hypercritick, for ſo by the Title of one of his Eſſays he has authorized us to call him, does on many Occaſions diſcover his Partiality more than his Judgment. I might farther obſerve, that *Ariſtotle* too has ſeveral References to our Poet, which are capable of receiving a great deal both of Light and Beauty, by comparing them with the Original. I ſhall but produce one Inſtance out of him; and the rather, becauſe it relates to the Subject of Morality, which I deſire may always be of the firſt Conſideration in my Remarks. This Philoſopher in his *Ethicks*, adviſes us with reſpect to Pleaſure, to approve and apply the Judgment of the old Gen-

tlemen of *Troy* concerning *Helen.* The Thought is intelligible in *Aristotle*, but certainly makes a far greater Impression, when we examine it by the Passage, upon which it bears; 'Tis in the Third Book where *Priam*, with several grave Courtiers about him, whom Age had exempted from the Duty and Toils of War, and fitted for Counsel, were deliberating upon the Means of procuring a speedy Peace. But, upon the approach of *Helen*, are so charm'd with her Mein and Beauty, that they forget all the Calamities they were considering to find a Period of, and cease to wonder how so fine a Woman, *who might with Goddesses in form compare*, had been the Occasion of so long a War. However, after a conscious Whisper, recollecting themselves, they advise *Priam* to prevent the fatal Consequences of detaining her longer,

longer, beautiful and lovely as ſhe is, to let her go: As in the deſign of *Ariſtotle*, we ſhould always oppoſe the Danger or Scandal which *Pleaſure* may terminate in to the flattering Careſſes wherewith ſhe makes her firſt Advances. But if I may, Sir, be allowed to give my Opinion of the Original Paſſage itſelf, perhaps there is not any one, in any of the Poets, nor even in *Homer*, that deſcribes Beauty more to the Life, or diſcovers the Force of it by a more artful and inſinuating Addreſs. An *Aſſembly* of aged Counſellors, ſuperannuated from all other Service, upon ſight of *Helen* are repreſented as forgetting the Affair for which they were *Aſſembled*, tho' of the laſt Conſequence to themſelves, their Country and Poſterity.

Sometimes we meet with References in Authors, which 'tis

not only proper to recur to *Homer* for the Illuſtration of, but neceſſary in order to render them intelligible. I ſhall but produce one Inſtance to this purpoſe out of *Martial*, and from that place, where he complains of the exceſſive Poetical Liberty among the *Greeks*,

Græci quibus eſt nihil negatum & quos Ἄρες, Ἄρες, *decet ſonare.*

Where he alludes to that Line in the fifth *Iliad*, Ἄρες, Ἄρες, Βροτολοιγέ —— but without knowing that he alludes to it, his Meaning would be at the beſt very obſcure. Tho' it may be queſtion'd, Sir, whether this or any other Liberty *Martial* could have objected to the *Greek* Poets, be ſo extravagant as that he allows himſelf, when for the ſake of his Verſification, and contrary, if I miſtake not, to the Faith of all other

other Writers, he makes the ſecond Syllable in *Porſenna* of ſhort Quantity;

Hanc ſpectare manum Porſena *non potuit.* Sc.

Human Authors do not only abound with References and Alluſions to *Homer*, but alſo the Chriſtian Fathers, eſpecially of the firſt Centuries, and in particular *Juſtin Martyr*. But I would avoid as much as poſſible, the Pomp and Pedantry of Quotation. Thoſe who will conſult *Duport*'s *Gnomologia*, may eaſily Collect numerous Inſtances to confirm what is here obſerv'd.

I ſuppos'd, Sir, it might be of further uſe to publiſh Critical Remarks on *Homer*, as he is uſually, if not every where, read at School by thoſe, who would be thought to have any ſhare of a liberal or learned Education. The

ordinary Business of Masters, and which they primarily intend, is to teach Boys the Grammatical Construction, the Language and Phraseology of this Author; to make them capable of rendering him in their Native Tongue; or of imitating him in the Purity and Propriety of his Diction. But the Knowledge of Words and Phrases is only necessary to the Communication of our Thoughts, and the Knowledge of Things. And tho' *Homer* is highly to be admir'd for these and all other Beauties of Stile, yet his Sentiments are still more admirable for the Entertainment and Instruction they afford us; especially at an Age when this Poet is usually read, and a competent Skill in the Language suppos'd, it may be proper to engage Youth in the more manly and generous Exercise of their Thoughts upon him, and to shew them

them thoſe Maſter-Strokes of his Wit, wherein he ſhines and ought to be imitated. 'Tis an Error to think that to be able to render *Homer* in *Latin* or *Engliſh* is to underſtand him. Tho' he is one of the moſt clear and perſpicuous Writers in the World, yet his Deſign and the Sublimity of his Thoughts are not always diſcoverable at firſt View. Thoſe who are the greateſt Maſters of his Language will confeſs the oftner they have read him, they have ſtill obſerv'd in him ſomething new, admirable and ſurprizing. If what I have to ſay upon him may contribute to give his younger Readers a more juſt Idea of his Excellencies, and make them more in Love with him, I ſhall be ſufficiently juſtified in my Undertaking, tho' I had engaged in it upon no other Motive.

Yet

Yet give me leave, Sir, to mention one further Motive, and which had indeed the greateſt Weight of all with me, and that is from the good uſe which may be made of him with reſpect to the great Principles of Morality. The Knowledge of humane Authors is not only Ornamental, but neceſſary to Divines. We may at leaſt take a deſultory Taſt of their Elegancies, and ſelect what is moſt uſeful and reliſhing in them. It may be obſerv'd, that the greater Lights of the Church, in all Ages, have been thoſe who were more Converſant in the politer Parts of human Literature; and we may extend the Obſervation to the beſt and greateſt of our *Engliſh* Preachers.

Now the great Conceptions of the Deity of a Providence of Moral Virtue in all its Branches, which diſcover themſelves in *Homer*,

mer, ſeem to raiſe his two Poems, like the two Summits upon *Parnaſſus*, above the common Level of human Writers. Tho' I am far from thinking with Mr. *Barnes* (if it be true, he prepar'd a *Latin* Diſſertation to prove it) that the Books which go under *Homer*'s Name, were written by the Divine Author of *Eccleſiaſtes*; Notwithſtanding the Conformity of his Sentiments, and ſometimes of his Phraſeology, with thoſe both of *Solomon* and *David*. From whence 'tis only probable, according to the beſt Calculation, that *Homer* lived about the Time of theſe inſpir'd Writers, and had ſeen their Works. Mr. *Barnes* his Conjecture is however full as probable as that of *Gronovius*, who wrote a Treatiſe formally to prove, that *Rameliah* was the ſame with *Romulus* the Founder of *Rome*. But both theſe Conjectures

jectures are much ſtronger Proof that a learned Man, like thoſe of other Profeſſions, may ſometimes affect a *Noſtrum*, and one peculiar Scheme or other of diſtinguiſhing himſelf. Whether this proceeds from an Ambition to advance ſomething new and ſurprizing; or from the Vanity of aſſerting Paradoxes; or of ſhewing that the Author is able to ſay ſomething upon any thing or from whatſoever other Cauſe; the Obſervation is founded on too many, and frequent Facts. But the greateſt Danger is, when Men of a warm and headſtrong Imagination ſet up for *Theoriſts*, or Diſcoverers; at the ſame time they are hurry'd away with the Force of it, they are apt to puſh, and carry others along with them. There is a Contagion of Mind, as well as of Body, which ſpreads it ſelf in Converſation and Books, like

like a poyſonous Vapour in the Air; and we may frequently obſerve, that there are Perſons who perſwade more by the Confidence and bold Air wherewith they deliver themſelves, than others who are leſs aſſuming, with all the Strength of juſt and ſtrict Reaſoning. I do not know, Sir, whether the Growth of *Quakeriſm*, or of any other *Enthuſiaſm*, can be ſo well accounted for, as from this Contagion of Imaginations; which was ſo ſtrong at the firſt, as to cauſe ſtrange Agitations and Diſtortions of the Body, and to infect the Mind to a certain degree of Madneſs. But as Epidemical Diſtempers commonly loſe their Malignity, when they are come to the Heighth; ſo the *Quakers* are in great Meaſure recovered from their firſt Phrenzy and Infatuation, and we find them ſomething at leaſt more capable

of

of being reaſon'd with. The ſame Obſervation may be extended to the late *Camiſars*; only as the Spirit wherewith they were agitated, and impell'd one another, was not altogether ſo ſtrong as that of *Fox* and *Nailor*, and their immediate Followers; the Infection of it neither ſpread ſo wide, nor was attended with ſo laſting and dangerous Effects. This Remark, Sir, is highly agreeable to the Characters Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtorians give us of the Principal *Hereſiarchs*, and of ſuch as have been in any Reſpect, the great Diſturbers of the Church's Peace. They were uſually Men of a Spirit naturally Refractory, and of a bold domineering Imagination, with a competent ſhare of Learning, Volubility of Tongue, and much Profeſſion of exterior Sanctity. It muſt be granted, a Perſon ſo qualifyed, may eaſily, I had almoſt

ſaid

ſaid mechanically conveigh into weak Imaginations the Spirit and Malignity of his own. But would People, who have any Strength or Liberty of Mind, only conſider when they think themſelves Convinced, what it is they are Convinced of, and by what cogent Reaſons, they would much ſooner learn to diſtinguiſh between juſt Reaſoning and confident Talking, and be in leſs Danger from the *contagious* Force of it.

I ſhall endeavour, Sir, to make Amends for this Digreſſion, by obſerving to you the juſt Sentiments *Homer* had, both with reſpect to his Theology and Morals. Without entring here into the Queſtion, whether what he ſays concerning the Gods, ought to be explain'd in an allegorical Senſe; 'tis certain he acknowledg'd a Supreme Deity, and ſpeaks of him after a manner,

in

in ſeveral Places, that diſcovers he had very ſublime Notions of his Attributes. I ſhall only, becauſe I would not too much anticipate what I have to ſay in the Remarks, inſtance in that of *Power*. This being the Attribute to which we owe the viſible Origin of Things, and which we no ſooner open our Eyes, but we ſee every where the ſtupendous Effects of it; may be conſider'd as the firſt Idea of the Divine Nature which enters into the Mind: It is the firſt that *Moſes*, in the Hiſtory of the Creation, has diſclos'd to us; and, in the Words, obſerv'd by *Longinus*, to have a Grandeur and Magnificence in them ſuitable to the Dignity of the Speaker, and the Occaſion: *And God ſaid, Let there be Light, and there was Light.* The Pſalmiſt gives the ſame Idea of Omnipotence exerting itſelf into Act, and with the ſame noble Simplicity

plicity; *For, at his Word the Heavens were made, and all the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth.* In both theſe Places, the Word of God, at the inſtant it is produc'd, operates, and at once perfects his glorious Deſign; and in the later of them, we ſee an infinite Variety of the moſt admirable and ſurprizing Effects immediately riſing out of one ſingle Cauſe. I do not ſay, Sir, that we have any Sentiment in *Homer* concerning the Divine Power ſo expreſſive and magnificent as theſe; yet, in the very Entrance of his *Iliad*, he aſcribes the great Events of it to the overruling Diſpoſition of his Sovereign Deity †, and repreſents them in few, but comprehenſive Terms, flowing from his *Will*, as *Moſes* and *David* deſcribe the wonderful and mighty Works of God, to the

† Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο Βυλή.

ſole

sole Operation of his *Word.* It may be further observ'd, to the Advantage of *Homer*, that he is perhaps the only Writer, Heathen or Christian, who to make us conceive of that Divine Power, whereby God governs the World, in a more noble and worthy Manner, never makes use of the Term *Fortune*, tho' sometimes indeed, he employs that of *Fate*; whereby he does not yet intend a Stoical and necessary Concatenation of all Causes and Events, but only the setled Order of Providence, conducted by infinite Wisdom and Goodness. *Virgil*, who knew so well how to transfer the great and beautiful Sentiments of *Homer*, speaks of the Divine Power much after the same Manner. Thus he represents *Neptune* calming the Rage of the Sea while he was commanding it to be calm, or rather before his Command could be perfectly deliver'd.

Sic

Sic ait, & dicto citius, *tumida æquora placat.*

Which therefore Mr. *Dryden* does not fully come up to in his Tranſlation.

He ſpoke, and while *he ſpoke, he calm'd the Seas.*

Homer aſſerts the Power of God, not only in Words, but in aſcribing to him Actions the moſt ſignificant and expreſſive of it. When *Thetis* addreſſes Herſelf to *Jupiter*, that he would revenge the Indignities done to her Son *Achilles*, he ſays no more directly in Anſwer to her Requeſt, but, that he will ratify it with a *Nod*, the ſure and infallible Sanction of what he deſigns, and which nothing can fruſtrate or reverſe. But the Manner wherein *Jupiter* is repreſented making this divine *Signal* with the Motion of his Head, has ſomething in it

ſo

ſo peculiarly fine, noble, and harmonious, that perhaps there is not a more beautiful and lively Image in any of the Poets, or in all the Works of *Homer*. I ſhould do him too great Injury by offering at a Tranſlation of the Paſſage refer'd to.

Ἦ καὶ κυανέῃσιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε Κρονίων.
Ἀμβρόσιαι δ' ἄρα χαῖται ἐπερρώσαντο ἄνακτος.
Κρατὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο, μέγαν δ' ἐλέλιξεν Ὄλυμπον.

1 Iliad 528. 29. 30.

'Tis highly probable, this might have been one of thoſe Places which gave Occaſion for the Reflection of *Ariſtotle*, That *Homer* alone knew how to uſe Words that have Life in them: Which is very agreeable to an Obſervation of *Cicero*, That if it were true, *Homer* was really blind, yet he has deſcribed

deſcrib'd things after ſuch a manner, as to render what he could not ſee himſelf viſible in the brighteſt Colours to us. —— *Nos ut videremus efficeret.* This is certain, there are many Paſſages in him, where the very Sound of his Verſe ſeems to convey the Senſe of it; and which ſhew that he had the Art of making the Manner of his Expreſſion ſignificative of the Matter expreſt. The Lines here cited, are ſaid to have had ſo powerful an Effect upon *Phidias*, that he is reported to have drawn one of his moſt finiſh'd Pieces from the Impreſſion. *Scaliger* indeed, who ſeldom loſes any Pretence of cavilling at *Homer*, laughs at this Story, and tells us, in a dry ſupercilious way of Raillery, That *Phidias* knew well enough, without this Deſcription of *Homer*, *Jupiter* ought not to have been painted without Hair and Eyebrows. But

Scaliger

Scaliger too ſhould have known, there are a thouſand Things we need not be inform'd of as to their Exiſtence; and yet the different Manner or Dreſs, wherein they are preſented to the Mind, give it very different Motions and Sentiments. And the Image wherewith *Phidias* was ſtruck in the Poetry of theſe Lines, while it was freſh and vigorous on his Imagination, might very naturally transfer itſelf into his Painting. This Reflection I am inſenſibly fall'n upon, concerning *Homer*'s Choice and Diſpoſition of proper Words to expreſs the Things he deſign'd, is particularly inſiſted upon by *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus* *, and in a very clear and judicious Manner; but he only inſtances in thoſe Lines of the *Odyſſy* † where *Siſyphus* is repreſented heaving up a huge Stone

* *De Collöc. Verbor.* † *Ode* 11. 592.

againſt

againſt a craggy Aſcent; which he has no ſooner puſh'd to the Top, but it comes tumbling down again upon him. The Author of the *Critick* on *Milton* has cited theſe Lines on the ſame Occaſion, and obſerves, that none of the Criticks before him had taken Notice of it. I thought, Sir, *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus* had always been allow'd a Critick, and of the firſt Diſtinction. But I rather ſuppoſe this ſlight Eſcape might proceed from a Forgetfulneſs more incident to great Wits, than from an Affectation, almoſt common to all Writers, and eſpecially the Criticks, of making new Diſcoveries.

But I return, Sir, as I propoſed, to inſtance in the Purity of *Homer*'s Morals. One material Evidence whereof, and which I ſhall only produce at preſent, is, the Purity of his Language in Oppoſition to Groſſneſs and Ribaldry: He is

highly to be admir'd for the great Decorum, every where obſerved by him, in what relates to Love and Beauty; Subjects wherein Poets, and all other Writers of a lively Imagination, are moſt apt to offend againſt the Rules of Decency. His Words are always chaſt, and, except perhaps in one or two Paſſages, which may admit of greater Latitude, his Sentiments. The moſt impure Image in him is, where he deſcribes an accidental and very unexpected Interview *Jupiter* had with *Juno*. Upon this Occaſion, *Jupiter* expreſſes an Impatience, and holds a Converſation with the Goddeſs, which I dare by no means undertake to defend the Regularity of. But then, as if *Homer* had foreſeen the Offence that might be taken at ſo exceptionable a Scene, he took Care to excuſe it by giving *Juno* all the Beauty and Advantages, a Goddeſs was capable of by

by Nature or Art: As *Virgil*, with a like Addreſs, in ſome meaſure excuſes the Indiſcretion of *Dido*, by intereſting both Heaven and Earth to work up her Paſſion to an irregular heighth. Yet if there be not always that Delicacy in the Sentiments of *Homer*, upon the Subject of Love, which we ſometimes obſerve in Perſons of a very inferior Genius; This is not ſo much to be objected as a Fault to him, as of the Age wherein he wrote: The Simplicity of Manners in thoſe Days might render many Freedoms of Converſation and Behaviour inoffenſive, which at preſent would perhaps appear very diſagreeable, if not altogether ſhocking. But if it ſometimes happen, that when the Ear is moſt chaſt, the Heart is moſt corrupt; if it be true, (what there is great Reaſon to ſuſpect) that People of the niceſt Addreſs have not always the moſt vertuous

Inclinations; you will ſtill agree with me, Sir, that the ancient Simplicity is highly preferable to our modern Politeneſs. After all, Sir, our modern Poets are not ordinarily ſo very chaſt or polite, as to have any Advantage, in this reſpect, upon the Compariſon, with either *Homer* or *Virgil*. The later of theſe Poets eſpecially, ſince I have nam'd him, is not inferior to *Milton* himſelf in deſcribing the Paſſion and Effects of Love after a diſtant, but ſenſible and lively manner. They have both of them, like *Homer*, the Secret of conveying tender and moving Sentiments to the Heart, without offending the Ear. Before that fatal Adventure of *Dido*, which ruin'd her, we have the Force of this Paſſion repreſented, with all the Art and Addreſs imaginable; but there, the Poet barely relates the Action, and in few Words, without giving us any Image

Image of it, leaves it to ſpeak for itſelf. He had taken Care before, to cover, as much as poſſible, *Dido*'s Diſgrace, by a Concurrence of all the Circumſtances, which could be ſuppos'd to betray her into the Occaſion of it.

From this Conduct and Precaution of *Virgil*, it appears to me he had greater Sentiments of that Virtue, wherein the Glory of the Female Sex conſiſts, than the vertuous *Martia* herſelf in the celebrated Tragedy of *Cato*, where ſhe delivers the following Words;

In ſpight of all the Virtue we can boaſt,
A Woman that deliberates, is loſt.

I do not know, Sir, whether this be any great Complement to the Ladies. We grant, 'tis ſpoken by a Heathen Lady; but 'tis by one that makes Profeſſion of a rigid and ſtrict Virtue, and which Regard is always to be had to, before a Chri-

ſtian Auditory. Yet why ſhould it be thought abſolutely neceſſary that any Woman *muſt* fall whenever ſhe happens to make a falſe Step? Why ſhould not we allow the other Sex a Liberty of Mind, wherein the great *Triumph* of Virtue conſiſts, to reſiſt an Inclination, they might at firſt have indiſcreetly entertain'd? Tho' were the Words to be underſtood *only* as a Caution to the Ladies, againſt all indecent or irregular Advances upon the firſt Motions of Love, the Author's Deſign had been very juſt; but then he ought to have ſpoken them *as* a Caution, and not in Terms ſo general as appear to turn it into a Reflection.

I cannot, Sir, but here obſerve, that tho' Mr. *Dryden* was a great Judge of Decency, and all the other Qualifications of a good Poet; yet, the Force of his Imagination frequently carry'd him in the Point I

am

am conſidering, againſt his Judgment. This is too viſible in moſt of his Writings; but I charge it more particularly upon him here, as in his Tranſlation of the firſt Book of the *Iliad*, he has been very injurious to *Homer*. Thus where *Agamemnon* is introduc'd declaring his Reſolution in the following Words, not to part with *Chryſeis*,

Τὴν δ' ἐγὼ οὐ λύσω, &c.

Words that do not convey the leaſt impure or looſe Idea to the Mind, and which do not ſo much as import, that the Hero deſign'd this Lady for his *Paracoit*; Mr. *Dryden* has this unchaſt Verſion:

Unſold Chryſeis *ſhall a Slave remain,*
Till cloy'd with Joys I break the uſeleſs Chain.

What he repreſents *Agamemnon* ſaying on the ſame Occaſion afterwards

wards is ſo groſs, I ſhall not out of Regard to good Manners tranſcribe it. The wrong Mr. *Dryden* has done *Homer*, by theſe Liberties, is the greater, if what *Athenæus* † reports after *Ariſtotle*, be true, That *Agamemnon*'s keeping a Miſtreſs cannot be collected from any thing this Poet has ſaid, in the whole *Iliad*.

I have now only, Sir, to acquaint you in the laſt Place, with the Method I propos'd to myſelf in the following Remarks; which was firſt, To examine the *Iliad* by the Rules of *Epick* Poetry, and to conſider in general the other Poetical Beauties of it; more eſpecially with reſpect to the noble Simplicity, Harmony and Perſpicuity of the Poet's Diction. The latter of theſe Qualifications is ſo neceſſary in all Writers who de-

† Deipnos. lib. 3.

ſire to ſucceed, that I cannot forbear ſaying ſomething of it in this place; without it indeed all the other great Talents of an Author are of ſmall Importance to himſelf or others. He will improve very little by his own Speculations, who is not able to impart them in a clear and diſtinct manner. Obſcurity of Language naturally ariſes from hudled and confuſed Thoughts, if it be not always occaſioned by them. Yet it is ſometimes the Unhappineſs of Men very learned in many reſpects, that they do not conceive things, nor for that reaſon expreſs their Conceptions clearly. This Misfortune was very much lamented in the late famous Mr. *Dodwell*, and renders his Works, wherein there are ſeveral things admirable, of much leſs uſe to the World. We ſometimes find it difficult to keep up our attention

to an Author, when he writes with the greateſt eaſe and facility; but when our attention becomes painful on the account of harſh and confuſed Language, we are much ſooner diſcouraged, and perſwaded to lay him by. What I have obſerv'd, as an unhappy Defect in Mr. *Dodwell*, gives me a proper Occaſion of paying a ſmall Homage to another celebrated *Lay-writer*, * who has eminently diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the Service of Religion, and who with all the Advantages of uſeful Learning, human and divine, is Maſter of the greateſt Perſpicuity and Propriety of Stile.

I propos'd in the ſecond Place, To conſider the moſt material Objections that have been rais'd againſt *Homer*, with reſpect to the *Iliad*, by ancient and modern Cri-

* Mr. *Nelſon.*

ticks,

ticks, or which might ariſe from my own Obſervation. This is the moſt invidious and ungrateful part of the Work. For tho' poſſibly there may be ſome things exceptionable in this Poem,

——————— *Velut ſi*
Egregio inſperſos reprendas corpore
Nævos.

Yet there is hazard in arraigning, tho' upon good Evidence, and only in part, what has once got a popular Sanction, and been received with univerſal Applauſe. Beſides, it has been obſerv'd in Fact, that the Criticks, who have wrote againſt *Homer*, in attacking his Reputation, have ſeldom or never fail'd to expoſe their own. *The Muſes*, ſays Madam *Dacier*, *have always taken Care to revenge their Favorite. Protagoras* the Sophiſt, *Plato* and *Zoilus*, are remarkable Inſtances of what this learned and ingenious

ingenious Lady obſerves. I know nothing the Sophiſt has left us, but a wretched Criticiſm (for which he is chaſtiſed by *Ariſtotle* *) upon *Homer*'s Invocation, in the Entrance of his Work; where he ſpeaks to the Deity invok'd, in the Imperative Mood, which yet may be, and is often promiſcuouſly uſed, for the Optative. If we may judge of the reſt of *Protagoras* his Criticiſms upon *Homer* from this, he had ſmall Proſpect, I do not ſay of advancing, but of ſaving his Reputation by them.

Plato really Merits the Name of a Critick, and many of his Criticiſms on *Homer* are juſt; yet the Diſreſpect, wherewith he ſometimes treats that Poet, provok'd *Athenæus* † to fall upon him in the moſt violent manner, and to tranſmit his Name to Poſterity, ſo far as he was capable of tranſmitting it, with

* Poet. l. 19. † Deipnos. l. 15.

great

great Diſadvantage. I forbear to render the Terms wherein *Athenæus* ſpeaks; there ſeems to be as much Rancour and little *Decency* in them, as in ſome of our fugitive Weekly Papers. But what Diſorders are our Penmen in a way of running into, when one, who for ſome Years took upon him to judge of polite Writing and Manners, and in many things, BY YOUR FAVOUR, judg'd well, has left after Ages, if they may be handed down ſo long, two or three of the moſt groſs and ſcandalous Precedents in this kind, (tho' very much at his own Expence) which this or perhaps any Age has produced. If we be ſuffer'd to go on in theſe Irregularities, where will they terminate at laſt? Shall we not juſtly lie under a Suſpicion both at home and abroad, at once of forgetting our good Senſe and Correctneſs,

rectneſs, as Writers, and our good Temper, as *Engliſhmen?*

But, above all the reſt, that have Cavill'd at *Homer*, *Zoilus* has diſtinguiſh'd himſelf. Yet inſtead of Eſtabliſhing his Credit with *Ptolomy Philadelphus* by his Criticiſms, to whom they were Addreſſed, he had but a very indifferent Reception upon preſenting them. He is reported by *Vitruvius* to have come to an unfortunate End. This we know, that he is become a common Name of Reproach to every pretending Writer, that would ſignalize himſelf by Pedantry, and falſe Criticiſm.

I may add, Sir, that a more modern Critick, mentioned before, has acquir'd no great Reputation by his Endeavours to leſſen, or rather indeed to vilify *Homer*; for to this End, among other homely Compariſons, he is ſo indecent as to go into his Kitchin for one, and tells

tells us, that the † Sentences of this Poet in particular, are ſo jejune, vulgar and inſipid, that even his Cook would not be capable of reliſhing them. I ſhall take the Liberty of tranſcribing ſome part of Mr. *Dryden*'s Judgment of this learned Man. *Julius Scaliger*, ſays he, *would needs run down* Homer; *and abdicate him after the Poſſeſſion of Three thouſand Years. Has he ſucceeded in his Attempt? He has indeed ſhown us ſome of thoſe Imperfections incident to human Kind. But who had not rather be that* Homer *than this* Scaliger. *You ſee the ſame* Hypercritick —— We ſhould the leſs wonder at the Prejudice *Scaliger* had taken up againſt *Homer*, as in the Epiſtle to his Son *Sylvius*, before his *Poetick*, he ſpeaks very much to the Diſad-

† Jul. Scaliger. Poet. l. 5.

vantage

vantage of *Ariſtotle*'s Art of Poetry, ſo much, and ſo juſtly eſteem'd by good Criticks in all Ages; for which the learned *Ger. Jo. Voſſius* animadverts handſomely upon him in the Introduction to his *Poetical Inſtitutions.*

I need produce no other Inſtances to ſhew how full of Hazard and Danger it is either to revive, or raiſe Objections againſt *Homer.* Yet am the leſs diſcouraged at theſe Examples, as I have no Intention to follow them in a way, wherein it has been obſerv'd, they ſo unhappily miſcarried. Tho' where I ſee reaſon for obſerving any conſiderable Defect in the Poet, ſhall do it with a Deference due to his Character, and the Frailty of human Nature, in its higheſt Elevation.

I propos'd, Sir, in the laſt Place, to defend *Homer*, but ſo far only as he appears defenſible, from the ſeveral Charges that have been brought againſt him, and particularly by *Plato* and *Scaliger*. For Truth is what I ſhall ever deſire to Sacrifice all private, and partial Conſiderations to. And herein I have the Example of *Longinus*, who was a great Admirer of *Homer*'s Excellencies, without thinking himſelf obliged to juſtify him in every little Eſcape; as Madam *Dacier* has ſometimes more generouſly, than ſucceſsfully attempted. This Critick, on the other hand, inſtead of defending ſome ſlight Miſtakes in *Homer*, by a fine Turn of Wit rather mentions them to his Advantage. For he happily compares him to a Perſon very rich, who for that reaſon cannot ſo ſtrictly look to things of little

little Conſequence, but muſt of neceſſity now and then commit ſmall Overſights.

This, Sir, I have thought proper to lay before You, by way of Preparation to the Remarks. And you are apprehenſive of my Undertaking a Work both of much Difficulty, and of far greater Length, than I at firſt intended. But you have been detain'd too long, from the uſeful Deſigns, wherewith I know you are taken up, both in Relation to the Publick, and the Intereſts of private Friends. I am not ſurpriz'd, if after all the prudent Meaſures you have taken to acquit yourſelf worthy of the Credit you are in with the great Men at Court, and with the greateſt political Genius, that ever appear'd in any Court; I am not ſurpriz'd, Sir, if after this, there are Perſons in the

the World who do not concur with me in the Sentiments I have expreſs'd, and ought to have, of your good and generous Qualities. But while I ſatisfy my own Mind in what I ſay or do, which by the Bleſſing of God I ſhall always endeavour, there is leſs to be apprehended from the Conſequences of what the World may think or ſpeak of me; eſpecially, at a time wherein a Diſſent in certain political Notions, is thought by an adverſe Party, ſufficient to cancel all the Obligations of Charity and good Manners, and I may add, Sir, while I am ſpeaking to you, of Friendſhip, and Gratitude; the moſt powerful of all other Engagements to an ingenuous Mind. For my part, leaving ſuch People to the Diſcipline of their own Minds, I ſhall always deſire to judge both of Things and Perſons,

accord-

according to Truth, and never make either private Obligations or Reſentments, the Foundation of my Judgment. I cannot at a more proper time, than after this Declaration, mention one good Quality in particular, which I have had an Opportunity of obſerving, and ſhould be very injurious to you not to mention, and that is, a diſintereſted Inclination to do whatever you once think reaſonable to be done; the *moſt diſintereſted*, I do not ſay, that I have known, but that I believe any Perſon upon his Knowledge, all Circumſtances conſider'd, can produce Inſtances of.

Permit me, Sir, to acquaint you in the Concluſion, that I was willing in a Work, to which I know myſelf ſo very unequal, to conſult ſome Perſons, who were beſt able to adviſe me in it. I had

had the Favour in particular of ſome general Directions from the Reverend Dr. *Sherlock*, Maſter of the *Temple*; who is equally happy in all the bright Qualifications of a *Scholar*, and a *Divine*.

I had alſo the Honour of Communicating my Deſign to another very good Judge in all the parts of polite Literature; the preſent Provoſt of *Dublin* †; and muſt therefore crave leave to acknowledge here his Candid Approbation of it. Tho' it can never be out of Place on any Occaſion, to mention a Perſon of ſo great and ſingular Humanity to all Perſons, on all Occaſions.

But I conſider to how great a Length I have drawn this *Prefatory Addreſs*; ſhall therefore retire at preſent, and wait on

† Dr. *Prat.*

you

you with the three ſeveral Parts of the Remarks, I am preparing, at ſuch proper and ſeveral Times, as you ſhall think fit to Command.

Reverend Sir,

Your moſt obedient

and faithful Servant,

Jan. 22. 1713-4.

RI. FIDDES.

AUTHORS *refer'd to, or cited in the* Prefatory Epiſtle.

Mr. *Addiſon.*
Ælian.
Ariſtotle.
Athenæus.
Mr. *Barnes.*
Cicero.
Madam *Dacier.*
Dionyſius Halicarnaſſeus.
Mr. *Dodwell.*
Mr. *Dryden.*
Dr. *Duport.*
Euſtathius.
Tanaquil Faber.
Dr. *Felton.*
Gronovius.
Horace.
Ben. Johnſon.
Juſtin Martyr.

D. *Lon-*

D. Longinus.
Lycurgus.
Martial.
Milton.
Minutius Felix.
Montaigne.
Mr. *Nelſon.*
Mr. *Norris.*
Ovid.
Plato.
Mr. *Pope.*
Protagoras.
M. *Rapin.*
Scaliger.
Seneca.
Shakeſpear.
Solon.
Mr. *St——l.*
Mr. *Trapp.*
Virgil.
Ger. Jo. Voſſius.